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music in the air



National Broadcasting Company

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NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.



A RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA SERVICE

RCA BUILDING · RADIO CITY

NEW YORK, N. Y.



NILES TRAMMELL
PRESIDENT

December 1 1941

N. Y. State College of Agriculture Library,
Ithaca, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

As NBC celebrates its fifteenth anniversary it is only natural to glance back down the road we have travelled as we make plans for the journey that lies ahead. Of all the programs broadcast every day in the year, no single class deserves greater mention than those in which fine music predominates.

Through the years, these programs of all types of music have found a common bond of sympathy among millions of listeners, because sooner or later, each discovered the music he loved best to hear. Then, too, these broadcasts are responsible for bringing entirely new conceptions of music as well as raising the standards of appreciation among music lovers the world over.

I am happy to send you herewith a copy of "Music in the Air", which summarizes briefly the work and growth of NBC's music division since its organization in 1926. I trust that you may find it informative, and shall be glad to receive your comments and suggestions.

Cordially

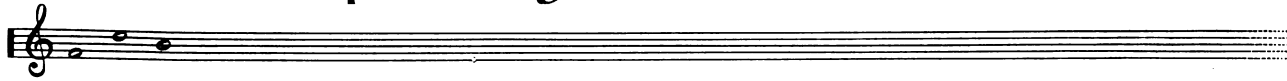
Niles Trammell



Grateful acknowledgment is made herewith to the Metropolitan Museum of Art through whose courtesy NBC is enabled to reproduce the charming Indian miniature on the front cover—Mughal: Period of Akbar.

"A Prince Listening to a Harpist in Paradise."

spanning new horizons



IT is self-evident that, during the present crisis, America must present a united front to the world. Morale of our armed forces must be maintained at the highest possible level, not only afloat, ashore and in the air, but—more important still—in the second line of defense—the millions of homes throughout America.

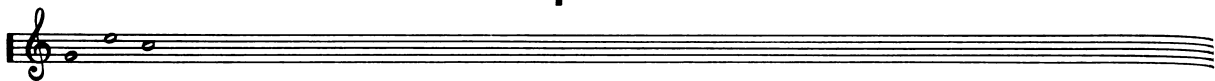
IN recent months, we in radio have had our obligations to millions of loyal listeners greatly increased. Nothing is more important than for the broadcasting industry to discharge these obligations by transmitting programs geared to the tempo of the times and furnishing a natural outlet for pent-up emotions.

THROUGHOUT the fifteen years of its existence, music has always played a dominant role in NBC's program schedule with especial emphasis on the work of American composers, authors and publishers. Basically, this policy will remain unchanged and—because listeners in all the Americas and throughout the world demand it—the scope of NBC's musical programs will continue to span new horizons.

Kies Trammell

P R E S I D E N T
NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY

music for millions



EVERY year NBC broadcasts thousands of musical programs to millions of listeners.

EACH of these programs is carefully planned and rehearsed many hours before going on the air.

IN the selection of program material, NBC is guided by the many thousands of requests from music lovers all over the United States, as well as by the expert criticism of our own music division, which comprises among its members many of America's most distinguished composers, conductors and arrangers, several of whom have been with NBC since its foundation.

NBC is indeed fortunate to have had the wise counsels and mature judgment of Dr. Walter Damrosch, dean of American composers; of Samuel Chotzinoff, distinguished critic; of Dr. Frank Black, eminent musical director; of Thomas Belviso, noted musicologist and composer; of Ernest La Prade, Don Marcotte, Roy Shields, Gordon Jenkins, Ricardo, and a host of others — all of whom have contributed unstintingly to the cause of building and producing great musical programs over the air.


BRIEF summaries of the various activities of NBC'S music division will be found on the pages which follow — activities which include everything from classical symphony to modern jazz and from grand opera to swing.


VICE PRESIDENT IN
CHARGE OF PROGRAMS

1926

music in the air

1941



*"There's music in all things, if men had ears;
Their earth is but an echo of the spheres."*

—Byron, "Don Juan".

MUSIC is a universal language speaking directly to the heart.

NO translator is needed to interpret its message for, like a potent draught of heady wine, it stirs to the depths the well-springs of human experience. A gay dance . . . a sleepy lullaby . . . a military march — each in its turn plucks the harp of many strings and etches indelible thought images on the retina of the mind. An old song . . . a half-forgotten bar of music . . . a waltz of long ago — these are the milestones of memory that grow more mellow with the passing years.

IN the hearts of men, great music was reborn — as Radio's first triumphant message soared aloft on wings of song.

SPANNING the barriers of time and space, Radio—like some powerful genii of old—has distributed to rich and poor alike the greatest treasures from music's golden store. To millions, it has brought inspiration, solace and contentment. It has created new empires of sound and new kingdoms of harmony.

HIGH above the swirling Thames, Big Ben booms a cheery Yuletide greeting across the years. Down from the hills of Palestine, come the sleepy songs of shepherds watching their flocks by night. Across New York's mightiest citadel of God, the age-old hymn "Adeste Fidelis" thunders in full diapason.

GLORIOUS, thrilling music — a sonata . . . a symphony . . . a violin concerto — music to suit every manner and mood — from the simple harmony of an old Gregorian chant to the complex polyphony of ultra-modern composition — these are Radio's gifts to a music hungry world!

interpreting the classics



THE part that NBC has played in raising the taste of America for fine music is one of the most interesting developments of modern radio. As far back as 1925 under the direction of Dr. Frank Black, symphonic programs were broadcast over Station WEAf (subsequently key station of the NBC Red Network), with an orchestra of only 22 men!

AS time marched on and transmission and reception improved, the public's taste advanced perceptibly. Technical perfection was taken for granted and audiences began appraising each director's interpretation. Little by little, the public's ears became attuned to full choirs of instrumentalists. In consequence, symphonic broadcasts came to be made with orchestras varying in size between 60 and 100 pieces.

THE NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

DURING the months that followed NBC's announcement in 1937 of the formation of a symphony orchestra for radio, more than 700 musicians from all over the world were heard by NBC's super-critical auditioning board, and after many weeks of deliberation — 94 artists were selected to form the first full-time, full-size symphony orchestra for radio. Press and

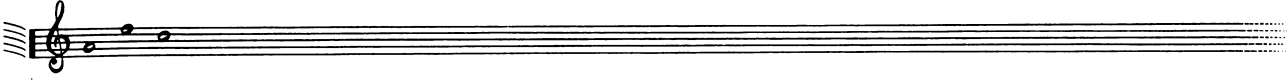
public alike accorded an overwhelming ovation to the opening concert under the baton of Arturo Toscanini on Christmas night 1937, which may be summed up in an excerpt from a leading editorial in the New York Herald Tribune: . . .

"No comparable enterprise has been attempted in America. Its possibilities are limitless; its effect on the democratization of music culture in the United States may well be profound."



Leopold Stokowski, internationally famous orchestra leader, whose dynamic individualistic style places him in the forefront of American conductors. He will direct eight concerts of the NBC Symphony Orchestra during the 1941-42 season. A complete list of concerts together with names of conductors will be found on the last page.

rise of American music



THE works of contemporary American composers have always received special consideration at NBC and not a year passes without one or more series being devoted exclusively to them.

IN the field of new music, NBC does not set itself up as judge. It acts merely as a clearing house for well-written music and presents it as such, leaving it to the radio audience to decide what each composition's rightful place will be in the repertoire. For some time past, America has been challenging the traditional musical supremacy of Europe. More music, and more good music, is being written in America today than anywhere else in the world.

TO this development, the National Broadcasting Company has contributed in various ways: by introducing new American composers and compositions; by frequent performances of established native works; by fostering the recently-awakened interest in our indigenous folk music; by awards offered in open competition and by commissions to composers whose previous accomplishments justify further encouragement. The company's policy in this respect is by no means of recent origin. It dates, indeed, from its inaugural program, broadcast on November 15, 1926, when more than twenty percent of the serious musical works presented were by American composers.

ORCHESTRAL AWARDS

IN 1931, NBC announced its Orchestral Awards, amounting to \$10,000, for symphonic works written by American composers specifically for broadcasting. The winners of these awards were Philip James, Max Wald, Carl Eppert, Florence Galajikian and Nicolai Berezowsky. In 1935, the NBC Music Guild offered three awards for chamber compositions by Americans. These prizes, amounting to \$1,750, were won by Mitya Stillman, Alois Reiser and Rudolph Forst. Two years later, the Company commissioned Gian-Carlo Menotti to write an opera for radio presentation. The result of

that commission was "The Old Maid and the Thief," first produced on April 22, 1939, over the NBC Blue Network and subsequently repeated a number of times, both on the air and on the stage.

FAMOUS PREMIERES

IN 1932, NBC broadcast the world premiere of "The Willow Tree," an opera written for radio by Charles Wakefield Cadman. Other American opera premieres on NBC include: "The Emperor Jones" by Louis Gruenberg, in 1933; "Merry Mount" by Howard Hanson, in 1934; and "Leon and Edrita" by Charles Flick-Steger, broadcast from Krehfeld, Germany, in 1936.

BROADCASTS of the American Music Festivals presented at Rochester under the direction of Dr. Howard Hanson have acquainted NBC listeners with the accomplishments of such gifted young composers as Charles Vardell, George McKay, Burrill Phillips, Gardner Read, Bernard Rogers, Roy Harris, Herbert Inch, Kent Kennan and many others.

"OUR AMERICAN MUSIC"

IN 1932, NBC inaugurated a series of programs based on John Tasker Howard's authoritative book "Our American Music," with the author as commentator and Thomas Belviso as conductor. This series, which constituted a survey of three hundred years of American music in all forms, was followed in 1933 by "The Life and Songs of Stephen Foster," a dramatized version of Howard's Foster biography, then in preparation. During the four years of its existence (1934-38), the NBC Music Guild performed 213 compositions by 107 American composers.

THE latest series dedicated by NBC exclusively to American compositions was inaugurated March 11, 1941, under the title "New American Music" and the direction of Dr. Frank Black, General Music Director of the National Broadcasting Company. Among the composers represented on these programs thus far are David Diamond, Charles Naginiski, Bernard Herrmann, Boris Koutzen, Gail Kubik, Walter Mourant and Edmund Haines. Such is the unfinished symphony of American musical life which began on NBC networks nearly fifteen years ago. Those who hear it may well exclaim with Walt Whitman: "I hear America singing!"

music appreciation hour



Dr. Walter Damrosch—Radio's most beloved composer and conductor — this autumn celebrates his fiftieth anniversary as conductor of the young people's concerts of America. Retiring in 1927 as director of the New York Symphony Orchestra, Dr. Damrosch joined NBC the following year as Musical Counsel and, as he put it, "began life anew at the tender age of 65!"

"friends of music" concerts



IN keeping with its fundamental policy of bringing to the radio public only the best in musical art, for several years past the National Broadcasting Company has broadcast exclusively the Sunday afternoon concerts of the New Friends of Music concerts from the Town Hall in New York City.

THE New Friends of Music was organized in 1936 by Mr. Ira Hirschmann, one of New York's prominent music patrons and a gifted non-professional pianist. Prices ranged from a dollar "top", with twenty-five cents for music students. The series was 97% sold out in advance of the first concert.

AS chamber music includes not only duos, trios, quartets, quintets and octets, but also many works for small orchestras not played by America's major symphony organizations, the New Friends of Music has organized its own chamber orchestra under the direction of Fritz Siedry, noted Viennese conductor. Famous chamber music ensembles including the Kolisch String Quartet, the Budapest, Pro Arte and Stradivarius string quartets have also been heard in addition to the regular orchestra.



... Edward Johnson, managing director of The Metropolitan Opera Company in New York City.



Broadcast during Opera Entre-act: Standing—Niles Trammell—president of the National Broadcasting Company, George A. Sloan—president of Metropolitan Opera Association, W. S. S. Rodgers—president of The Texas Company, sponsors of the Opera broadcasts. Seated—Mrs. Harold Vincent Milligan—president of the National Council of Women of the United States, Herbert Hoover.

national music week



David Sarnoff, president of the Radio Corporation of America and chairman of the board of the National Broadcasting Company, who, early in 1916 proposed the "Radio Music Box," which would make Radio a household utility in the same sense as the piano or phonograph.

A NUMBER of years ago, the first week in May was set aside as National Music Week, during which cities, towns and villages were asked to hold special celebrations in honor of American composers and American music generally. Like so many movements with humble beginnings, National Music Week fired the popular imagination and year by year it continued to grow, and is now heard in more than 3,000 communities over the air.

DAVID SARNOFF, chairman of the board of NBC, paid a glowing tribute to the success achieved by National Music Week, on its fifteenth anniversary. During a coast-to-coast broadcast, he said, in part:

"... National Music Week is more than a celebration. It has become a time for appraising our musical resources, and for thinking of ways and means to develop them further.

"During this present generation, we have witnessed an amazing growth of musical culture in this country. From what was once called 'the most unmusical nation on earth', we have become the world's greatest producer and consumer of music. The famous artists of other nations who visit our shores are impressed with the musical understanding and responsiveness of American audiences everywhere.

"And while we have made serious music popular in this country, at the same time we have raised popular music to the dignity of an art. By creating the demand for more interesting dance music, and better performance of it, we have opened new markets for skilled players and inspired the writers and arrangers of popular music to higher levels of achievement.

"Music is a form of human expression that has no enemies—only friends. It is a peculiarly unselfish art. Whether you enjoy making music or listening to it, your pleasure is greater when you share it with others. The more you give, the more you have."



GRAND TIE



grand opera for all the people



A LITTLE more than ten years ago, grand opera was considered only as musical entertainment for the favored few. Five years after the National Broadcasting Company was founded, radio transmission had improved to the point where world-famous artists and orchestra directors were satisfied that their voices and music could be broadcast satisfactorily and with minimum distortion. Accordingly grand opera made its historic debut over the networks of the National Broadcasting Company on Christmas afternoon 1931 from the great stage of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. Humperdinck's "Hänsel und Gretel" was performed with a distinguished cast including Queena Mario, Editha Fleisher, Dorothee Manski and Gustav Schuetzendorf. No better yardstick of the growth of the public's interest and appreciation of opera can be found than that well over one third of a million dollars — mostly in dollar bills and small checks — was subscribed by radio listeners to "Save the Met" million dollar fund campaign held during the 1939-40 opera season.

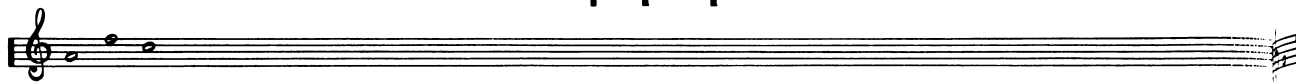
MR. EDWARD JOHNSON, managing director of the Metropolitan Opera Company, pointed out that the 1940-41 season had shown by far the greatest increase in mail received by the opera, by the Texas Company which sponsored the opera, and by the 133 stations of NBC's Blue Network, and WNBI and WRCA, International Short Wave Stations. Commenting upon this voluntary response, Mr. Johnson continued:

AUDIENCE APPRECIATION INCREASES

"IT is not only the quantity of this correspondence which is so significant, but it is also the general comprehension of opera, the musical intelligence and the appropriateness of the suggestions which strike the reader with such force. A more intelligent discrimination is noticeable today, and this fully as much among students of our high schools as among those in the adult world."

Broadcasting Saturday matinee performances of the opera requires split-second coordination. Top left: Milton Cross, veteran NBC announcer stands before the microphone in the sound proof broadcasting booth located in the center of the former Grand Tier. Backstage: De Vere Englebach of the NBC production staff follows the score, telephones cues for entrances and exits. Herbert E. Liversidge in charge of production, works closely with Charles C. Grey, sound engineer inside the booth. Hand signals are used to denote various changes in the score.

BROADCASTS OF popular music



IT is no longer possible to draw a sharp line of distinction between the lovers of classical and semi-classical music and devotees of popular and outstanding hit tunes. Radio is responsible for bridging the wide gap and introducing the classics to millions who had never before heard a symphony concert — and, on the other hand, presenting jazz, jive and swing to a whole new generation of classical addicts.

WHEN NBC broadcast the jazz meetings of "The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street" late on Sunday afternoons, immediately after an inspirational talk with a wide following among clergymen, the Monday morning mail frequently contained many epistles on church stationery which began:

"Hitherto, I have listened only to classical music. Last Sunday afternoon, I happened to leave my radio on and had the enjoyable experience of hearing modern jazz played by expert musicians. The buffoonery of the whole program was delightful..."

ALL STANDARDS RAISED

WHAT is true of "The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street" finds its counterpart in every other popular music program broadcast by NBC — namely, that it receives the best possible production by highly skilled orchestras.

Paul Whiteman recently declared:

"Musicians who play popular music today are infinitely superior in technique and craftsmanship to the musicians of ten years ago. Arrangers have learned more about orchestrations and musicians have discovered many new potentialities of the instruments on which they specialize."

BACKSTAGE in RADIO

THE present smooth functioning of the NBC music division is the direct result of a carefully planned organization over 15 years. For purposes of administration, it is divided into five groups, each with specially delegated duties, functions and obligations. Quite naturally, in an organization as large as NBC, some of these functions and duties overlap and sometimes it is hard to understand where one begins and the other leaves off.

THE Program Building and Advisory Group is charged primarily with the selection of program material. All are experts in many fields of music and, from wide experience, can be of inestimable assistance to conductors, artists and clients who seek advice in selecting musical material best suited to the requirements of their particular programs.

NBC's group of music arrangers occupies a unique place in modern radio because, until radio came of age, the arranger was a musician who occupied a comparatively humble position in the musical scale. As radio grew in scope, however, the public's appreciation was by no means confined exclusively to programs of classical and semi-classical music, but included dance bands, string ensembles, individual soloists — in fact, every form of musical expression to be heard over the air. As new technical improvements were achieved, musical arrangements of each piece were altered to emphasize or minimize different instrumental choirs.



Henry "Hot Lips" Levine, director of the concatenations of the "Dixieland Octet" Maestro Paul Laval, conductor of the "Windy Ten," between whom are grouped "Merrie Mad Mullahs" who make mighty music every meeting of the Chamberic Society of Lower Basin Street.

Mlle. Diane "Come-Hither" Courtney and Maestro Laval in an ultra-modern duet.



ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS

WHEN radio was very young, musical interpolations in dramatic shows were used merely to bridge the passage of time. However, when radio drama developed a technique and pattern of its own, greater and still greater opportunity was afforded musicians to interpret theme and mood with original compositions. The need for original composition grew apace and a group of composers — some of whom had had experience in writing music for motion pictures — were engaged to write music to intensify the dramatic peaks of each radio script. From thence, it was only a step to the preparation of complete original settings for radio dramas.


THE division of music rights has sometimes been called the “Cerberus of the Mike” for it has complete responsibility for seeing that all music presented by the National Broadcasting Company is transmitted over the air with the permission of the copyright owners.

SPECIAL “TUNE DETECTIVES”

ANOTHER important function of this division is to scan thoroughly every original composition submitted for broadcasting. Special “tune detectives” are employed to ferret out plagiarism, while other staff members carefully read the verses of songs to determine their acceptability. With each succeeding year, the activity of the music rights division has increased enormously. Today, with the expansion of radio broadcasting into the fields of television, radio recording and international short wave, all of whose music activities must be checked by this division — it handles between 90,000 and 100,000 items a month!

THE Music Division takes especial pride in having the largest music library in the world! From a modest start fifteen years ago, it has grown with amazing rapidity until today there are more than 500,000 titles on its shelves. These comprise everything from obscure early Seventeenth Century motets to the ultra-modern hut-sut song, thereby providing a catholicity of choice without equal in this country.

'round the world with radio



NO fabled Prince of Isfahan, no mighty Caliph of Baghdad ever enjoyed the feeling of supreme power that the humblest American radio listener accepts as his inalienable right — his ability to “tune in on the world”.

IN 1929, radio audiences were not nearly as sophisticated as they are today for, on a stormy afternoon in mid-winter of that epochal year, Milton Cross, veteran NBC announcer, in a voice bubbling with excitement, thrilled his great invisible audience with word that:

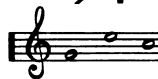
“The National Broadcasting Company and Associated Stations have an unusual surprise for you this afternoon . . . a program which is coming to you by Short Wave direct from England.”

THEN, flashing across 3,000 miles of open ocean, came the familiar strains of Rachmaninoff’s Symphony in E Minor played by a British symphony orchestra in historic Queen’s Hall in London.

DURING the twelve years that have elapsed since NBC transmitted that first historic broadcast from overseas, the world has been “shrunk”, as far as communications are concerned, to a fraction of its former size. The farmer in Keokuk now whistles the same tunes they are swinging in London night clubs . . . New Yorkers are dancing rhumbas to music furnished by Gaucho bands in the Argentine.

ALBERT HALL, Salle Gaveau, Gewandhaus, Concertgebouw, La Scala, Opera Comique, Bayreuth, Covent Garden, Salzburg . . . from these and other music capitals of the world have come memorable broadcasts.

1941 nbc symphony orchestra season 1942



IN the remarkably short space of half a decade, the NBC Symphony Orchestra has won outstanding recognition throughout the world. Acclaimed unanimously by press and public at the outset, it has achieved new laurels with each succeeding year. Not only is each concert considered a major musical event in New York but also in hundreds of cities and towns throughout the nation where groups of music lovers gather each Tuesday evening to hear programs of fine music directed by world famous conductors. The schedule of concerts for the 1941-42 season together with names of conductors follows:

DIMITRI MITROPOULOS *Oct. 7 and 14*

•

EFREM KURTZ *Oct. 21 and 28*

•

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI *Nov. 4, 11, 18 and 25*

•

JUAN JOSE CASTRO *Dec. 2, 9 and 16*

•

SIR ERNEST MACMILLAN *Dec. 23 and 30*

•

GEORGE SZELL *Jan. 6 and 13*

•

DEAN DIXON *Jan. 20 and 27*

•

DR. FRANK BLACK *Feb. 3 and 10*

•

ALFRED WALLENSTEIN *Feb. 17 and 24*

•

FRITZ REINER *Mar. 3 and 10*

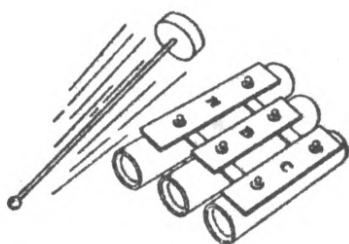
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SAUL CASTON *Mar. 17*

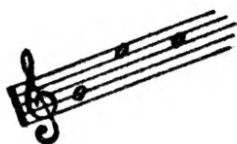
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LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI *Mar. 24, 31 and Apr. 7, 14*

EVERY TUESDAY EVENING 9:30-10:30 P.M. E.S.T.
NBC BLUE NETWORK



In olden times a personal seal was guarded as jealously as a man's honor for it was his signature. With similar diligence NBC guards its "Seal-of-the-air"—three muted notes on the NBC Chimes—heard by millions of listeners around the world, every day in the year.



national broadcasting company

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